

Speak up & be heard

CONSUMER REGISTER lists summaries of major consumer proposals before Federal agencies. If you wish to submit written comments, include your name & address, state the name & *Federal Register* citation of the proposal on which you are commenting and explain your views briefly & clearly.

Fish sticks, etc.

Commerce Dept. has adopted labeling requirements for fish sticks & fish portions manufactured from fish blocks composed of mechanically separated fish flesh.

The regulation requires the words "made from minced fish" to appear immediately after the product's name & with equal prominence. For example, "fish sticks made with minced fish." Processors have until Dec. 31, 1974, to replace existing labels.

Fish sticks & fish portions originally were made from whole fish fillets, but within the past few years new equipment has been used that tears the fish into small pieces. These particles are processed into rectangular blocks from which the fish portions (or sticks) can be formed. The use of this mechanical equipment has necessitated the issuance of new labeling requirements.

A more economical product could result for consumers because the mechanical separator enables industry to obtain more usable flesh from the fish skeletons & to utilize species that heretofore had been unprofitable to process by filleting.

Details—*Federal Register*: May 11, page 12334; Dec. 21, 1972. CONSUMER REGISTER: July 1, 1972.

Chitterlings

As of July 2, chitterlings—the large intestines of swine & calves—will be allowed in non-standardized meat food products as well as plain chitterlings sold as a specialty item. Agriculture Dept., which issued the regulation, said these products must all be produced under Federal inspection & must meet requirements for wholesomeness & safety.

Products containing chitterlings have to be clearly identified as to contents. For example, they must be labeled "chitterling pie," "chitterling loaf," "calf chitterlings & gravy."

Responses to a request for comments on this subject last winter indicated that consumers wanted properly identified chitterling products but did not know how to prepare them.

This new regulation will enable consumers to buy prepared chitterlings that meet standards of wholesomeness & safety. Also, the regulation means another variety of meat-type product is available for consumers.

Details—*Federal Register*: Jan. 4, page 799; June 1, page 14368. CONSUMER REGISTER: Feb. 1.

Appliance ratings

July 5 is deadline for comments on Commerce Dept.'s proposal to issue voluntary procedures for a voluntary

labeling program for major household appliances in order to promote energy conservation.

The program's goal is to provide consumers, at the point of sale, with information on the energy consumption & energy efficiency of major household appliances. Such information would be provided on labels displayed with appliances & written in language understandable to consumers. ("Energy consumption" means the amount of energy used by an appliance under actual operating conditions. "Energy efficiency" means a measure of the energy used by an appliance relative to its output of services.)

The following are major provisions of the proposed program:

- Household appliances to be included in the voluntary program would be room & central air conditioners, refrigerators, freezers, clothes washers, dishwashers, clothes dryers, kitchen ranges & water heaters; additional appliances may be added to the list later;

- An energy specification label would have to include information that would assist consumers in comparing by cost or otherwise the energy characteristics of a particular appliance with all others in its class, the label would have to be prominently attached to or displayed with each appliance in a manner assuring visibility & readability, & the label would have to include a certification mark to confirm the manufacturer's specifications.

- Manufacturers desiring to participate in the program would have to (1) inform Commerce; (2) agree to conduct all necessary tests to determine energy consumption & energy efficiency for each appliance; & (3) display the specification label & certification mark.

The program would benefit consumers in comparison shopping for appliances. Energy consumption data & efficiency ratings could be compared for different brands of an appliance to determine which brand would be cheaper to operate.

Details—*Federal Register*: June 5, page 14756. Send comments to Assistant Secretary for Science & Technology, Commerce Dept., Washington, DC 20230.

Imitation meat products

July 6 is deadline for comments on Agriculture Dept.'s proposal to allow fanciful or descriptive names for meat food products as an alternative to requiring the term "imitation" when certain products do not meet the standards of the products they resemble.

Under the proposal, manufacturers will have the option of (1) using the word "imitation" & listing the

main ingredients (with no mention of quantity) in sausage or frankfurter, or (2) calling the product a name such as "Lushus Pup," "Tasty Treat" or "beef & soy protein concentrate product," followed immediately by a percentage listing of the more important ingredients. In addition, the "Lushus Pup" or any other new product must be within the range of 90% to 150% of the nutritional properties of the meat it resembles.

The changes would implement proposals of the 1969 White House Conference on Food, Nutrition & Health, which recommended that foods developed from new processing methods be accompanied by labeling that would assure the consumer of his right to know exactly what he is buying.

The adoption of this proposal could provide consumers with a range of nutrition, possibly selling at prices below those for standard meat products.

Details—*Federal Register*: May 4, page 11092. Send comments to Hearing Clerk, Agriculture Dept., Washington, DC 20250.

Meat patties & otherwise

July 6 is deadline for comments on Agriculture Dept.'s proposal to establish 2 categories for meat-patty type products that are processed & labeled by food companies. Such products are sold as packaged meat patties (usually frozen) in grocery stores & as bulk supplies of patties for restaurants, sandwich shops & other food facilities.

The 2 categories are as follows:

- "Meat patty" would have to be made of ground meat, containing no more than 30% fat, plus seasonings. They could be labeled "beef patty" or "veal patty," for example, only to designate which type of animal was the source of the meat.

- "Patty with meat" would have to be made of at least 60% meat, containing no more than 30% fat. Other ingredients could be soy products, meat & poultry by-products, water & cereals, plus seasonings. "Patty with meat" would have to have not less than 13.5% protein with a minimum protein efficiency ratio (PER) at least 90% of the PER for "meat patty." In addition, percentages of all ingredients would have to be listed on the label.

Agriculture's proposal is the first time protein content & percentage ingredient labeling would be required for meat-product standards. (Agriculture sets standards for all foods containing meat.) Information such as this would enable consumers to be more selective in choosing among products that appeal to them for economical or nutritional reasons or both. Also, the proposal would assure consumers that hamburgers & other meat patty meals that they buy meet certain quality standards.

Details—*Federal Register*: May 4, page 11093. Send comments to Hearing Clerk, Agriculture Dept., Washington, DC 20250.

Smoking regulation

Civil Aeronautics Board has adopted a rule (with some changes) that it proposed last fall to require that as of July 10, smokers & non-smokers will be segregated on commercial & chartered aircraft.

Smoking will not be confined, as originally proposed, to the rear of each passenger compartment. The regulation will give airlines the right to decide on proper areas for smoking & non-smoking passengers. This gives airlines the opportunity to avoid load-balancing problems & to minimize points of contact between each group of passengers.

If the airlines do not properly use this flexibility, CAB will consider another ruling to designate locations of no-smoking areas.

Details—*Federal Register*: May 10, page 12207; Sept. 19, 1972, page 19146. CONSUMER REGISTER: Oct. 15.

Fireworks

July 16 is deadline for comments on Food & Drug Administration's proposal to ban many ordinary fireworks from interstate commerce & to set safety standards for other fireworks.

The proposal would ban such well-known devices as firecrackers, "dragon eggs," cracker balls & bottle rockets in addition to those already banned: cherry bombs, aerial bombs & silver & M-80 salutes. Injury reports indicate the hazards caused by these fireworks cannot be eliminated by caution labels or improved construction standards.

Under the proposed rule, all other fireworks would be permitted only if they are redesigned according to new safety standards. Some of these standards would be as follows:

- The fuses on cone fountains would have to burn more slowly than in the past—at least 3 seconds but no more than 6 seconds before ignition of device.

- Certain chemicals would be prohibited—arsenic sulfide, boron, mercury salts, red or white phosphorus, etc.

- Firework bases would have to meet size & construction standards.

- Cautionary labeling would have to appear on each device.

Fireworks for use by farmers & ranchers to protect their crops from birds & animals will continue to be available only through a qualified government official or agency, such as a wildlife management program administered by Interior Dept.

Details—*Federal Register*: May 16, page 12880. CONSUMER REGISTER: May 1, 1972; April 1, 1973. Send comments to Hearing Clerk, Health, Education, & Welfare Dept., 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20852.

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